

Congressman Elijah E. Cummings

December 17, 2003

7th Congressional District of Maryland
1632 Longworth House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515
(202) 225-4741 (202) 225-3178 fax

A message from Congressman Elijah E. Cummings



It is both a privilege and honor to represent you in the United States Congress. While serving you, I will continue outreach efforts to further inform you of legislative action in Congress. I welcome your advice. Government "by the people" is the cornerstone of my legislative philosophy.

*Elijah E. Cummings
Member of Congress*

On the Internet:
<http://www.house.gov/cummings>

Congressman Cummings Fights for \$63 Million for the 7th Congressional District; Votes Against Flawed Spending Bill;

On December 8, Congressman Cummings voted against the poorly-crafted Omnibus Appropriations Bill (H.R. 2673) since it severely altered several critical bipartisan provisions previously agreed to by both the House and Senate.

Although the core of the bill funds 11 of the 15 Cabinet departments, several independent government agencies, and the District of Columbia government, a partisan group of Senate and House Conferees (negotiators) excluded key negotiations of the Conference Committee as they secretly deleted or inserted the following language:

1. Ineligibility for Overtime Pay

The bill stripped a provision that would have stopped the U.S. Labor Department from disqualifying firefighters, police officers, nurses, and air traffic controllers from overtime pay.

2. Privatization of Federal Jobs

Republican Conferees eliminated language in the final Omnibus bill that would have protected thousands of federal jobs by prohibited outsourcing, unless it saved \$10 million or 10 percent of the federal program's costs.

3. Consumer Product Information

Under the final bill, producers and retailers of meat, fruit, vegetables and

peanuts would not be required to label the origin of their products. As a result, Americans may not know where their food is produced.

4. Lack of access to imported drugs

The controversial Omnibus bill also took out a provision that would have made it easier to import prescription drugs from foreign countries, despite this provision having passed both Houses.

5. Limited Media Ownership

The conference agreement abandons a previous bipartisan agreement of both the House and Senate that would have blocked the FCC from a new rule that would allow large media outlets to dominate the market. The new rule allows single companies to own television stations that reach more than 39 percent of the national audience, up from 35 percent.

"I could not vote for this bill because it presented the American people with a package that contained harmful provisions," Congressman Cummings said. "I am disappointed that these misguided provisions were slipped into the same bill that contained key federal funds for my district. It is not fair to my constituents."

The bill contains earmarks for more than \$63 million for the 7th Congressional District. The bill will be enacted only if the Senate passes the same bill and it is signed by the President. However, the Senate is expected to filibuster (block) the bill when it returns in January.

Congressman Cummings Applauds U.S. Troops for Capture of Saddam Hussein

Congressman Cummings applauded the 4th Infantry Division of the U.S. Army for the non-violent capture of former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein.

“The capture of Saddam Hussein without loss of life or injury is good news — for the people of Iraq, for the American people and for all the peoples of the world,” Congressman Cummings said. “I join all Americans in applauding the 4th Infantry Division and everyone else who was involved.”

Congressman Cummings then added that the nation and the international community must now redouble their efforts to capture Osama bin Laden, the terrorist who was responsible for the September 11th attacks upon the America people. He noted that what happens next with respect to Saddam Hussein will be extremely important.

“If we now act in a nonpartisan manner with wisdom and foresight, we have an opportunity to advance the cause of international peace and security, both in Iraq and throughout the world,” Congressman Cummings said.

He emphasized that Saddam Hussein may be able to provide intelligence critical to protecting U.S. troops. This intelligence includes whether Iraq possessed chemical and biological weapons prior to the removal of the Iraqi dictator and where those weapons are currently located.

“We need to conduct a process of interrogation, within the international rules of war, that provides credible answers to these questions for the people of Iraq, America and the world,” Congressman Cummings said. “The capture of Saddam Hussein offers the people of Iraq a renewed opportunity to come together and advance the process of regaining sovereignty over their own country. That process, in turn, will be crucial to achieving our goal of bringing American troops home to their families as soon as possible.”

Noting that Saddam Hussein's regime committed acts of genocide against the Iraqi people and all of humanity, Congressman Cummings said, “the families of these Iraqi victims deserve justice. Saddam Hussein should be tried under international law for genocide and crimes against humanity.”

However, as there is currently no Iraqi judicial authority that possesses legitimacy throughout Iraq, Congressman Cummings opposed the use of an American military tribunal to try Saddam Hussein would be a mistake. Instead, Saddam Hussein should be tried under international law by an international tribunal that includes judges from Iraq and other Islamic countries, he noted. He then expressed caution about whether such an international genocide trial could safely and prudently be conducted within Iraq itself.

“Our troops have done their job in capturing Saddam Hussein alive. Now, we must act with wisdom and foresight. Our next actions will be critical to our pursuit of justice, peace and international security within the rule of law,” Congressman Cummings said.

Congressman Cummings Refuses to Approve Flawed Prescription Drug Benefit for Seniors

In late November, Congressman Cummings voted against the *Prescription Drug and Medicare Privatization Act (H.R. 1)*, because it begins to dismantle Medicare through the guise of providing limited prescription drugs through the federally-funded health care program for seniors.

Although the bill was signed into law on December 8, 2003, Congressman Cummings is working with his colleagues to amend the defective aspects of the act. These provisions include:

1. Skyrocketing Costs: The act prohibits the Secretary of Health and Human Services from negotiating lower drug prices on behalf of America's 40 million Medicare beneficiaries.

“The only way to lower drug prices is to harness the market power of Medicare, like the Veteran's Administration has done for years,” Congressman Cummings said. “This act will not stop prescription drug prices from skyrocketing out of control and will actually increase drugs costs for seniors.”

2. Donut Hole: The act contains a coverage gap that will result in seniors spending thousands of dollars out of their own pockets. In what is called the donut hole, the compromise legislation requires recipients to pay for any prescription that costs between \$2,250 and \$5,100.

For example, if one's drug costs are \$3000, he or she would have no help in paying this bill through Medicare. This is in addition to the \$275 deductible and \$35 per month a recipient would have to pay.

3. Privatization: Another flaw with the act is that it pushes Medicare recipients towards private HMOs. This is because the drug benefit would be administered by a managed-care plan or a stand-alone drug benefit plan that would not guarantee coverage.

4. Undermine retiree coverage: Finally, the legislation undermines retiree coverage for 2 to 4 million seniors because the plan provides incentives for employers to drop the recipients of retiree coverage plans if they decide to get prescription drugs through Medicare. Congressman Cummings said. “Just as a doctor wouldn't prescribe a medicine that would make a patient feel worse, I refused to vote for a plan that would amount to a destructive prescription for seniors.” More than 157 national organizations including the AFL-CIO, Alliance for Retired Americans (ARA), and the American Public Health Association supported Congressman Cummings, along with 214 Democrats and Republicans in the House.



Congressman Cummings (far right) joins Mr. John Bryant (front left), the Chairman & CEO of Operation Hope, community leaders and students at City Springs Elementary Schools to launch a new program aimed at teaching children about financial management.

Congressman Cummings Helps Launch “Banking on Our Future”

Congressman Cummings joined community leaders on Tuesday, December 2, 2003 to announce a groundbreaking program to teach Baltimore City students the ABCs of managing money.

Banking on Our Future (BOOF) was established by Mr. John Bryant, the Chairman and CEO of Operation Hope, a national non-profit self-help organization working to bring economic self-sufficiency to underserved communities.

Banking on Our Future is an economic literacy initiative that teaches children the basics of managing their financial futures and surviving in a global economy.

“Economics is a life skill,” Congressman Cummings noted. “This program will teach young people the necessary economic literacy tools that they will use for the rest of their lives.”

Through the Banking on Our Future program, area bankers hold classroom sessions to teach students how to open checking and savings accounts, establish credit and maintain investments.

“We must teach young people the basic skills they need to make informed financial decisions and protect their financial future,” said John Bryant. “This is especially important for kids growing up in under-served communities, where there are fewer resources available.”

The first session kicked off at City Springs Elementary School in Baltimore City.

In addition to City Springs, the program will be brought to Dr. Rayner Browne Elementary School, Lombard Middle School, Mergenthaler Vocational Technical High School, Forest Park High School, Booker T. Washington Middle School, with further expansion of the program anticipated.

“Banking on Our Future represents a public-private partnership in which everyone gains,” Congressman Cummings said. “By making this investment in our children, we are making an investment in the future of our nation.”

Sponsors of the program include the Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation, Harbor Bank of Maryland, M & T Bank, Provident Bank, and State Farm Insurance.

Maryland Institutions Receive Federal Grants to Study Alternative & Complementary Medicine

Congressman Cummings announced that two research centers in Baltimore have received federal planning grants from the National Institutes of Health to conduct research on alternative and complementary medicine.

Johns Hopkins School of Medicine (JHU) received \$274,480 for a collaboration project with the National University of Singapore (NUS) and other units in China. Under the direction of Dr. Paul S. Lietman, M.D, the project will help create a JHU-NUS Center for research in Singapore.

In addition, the University of Maryland in Baltimore received \$255,940 for a collaboration project with the Chinese University of Hong Kong and the University of Illinois. Under principal investigator Dr. Brian M. Berman, M.D., the collaboration will create a center that will examine the treatment of digestive-related disorders through Traditional Chinese Medicine.

Scientists note that 80 percent of the world’s population uses plants to meet their primary health care needs. Therefore, scientists emphasize that conducting research on indigenous practices may lead to significant advances in global health.

“I am proud that scientists based in Maryland will be at the forefront of researching proven ancient methods that could treat modern ailments,” Congressman Cummings said.

Congressman Cummings Welcomes Photography Exhibit to Eubie Blake Center

During a reception held on December 1, 2003, Congressman Cummings celebrated the arrival of the *A Day in the Life of Africa* exhibit at the Eubie Blake Cultural Center in Baltimore. The major photography exhibition features an array of vivid photographs portraying life on the African continent from Tunisia to the Cape of Good Hope.

Congressman Cummings worked with Pfizer Inc, the sponsor of the exhibition, to make sure that Baltimore was included as one of the cities in the national tour.

"After viewing the *A Day in the Life of Africa* exhibit, I knew that the Eubie Blake Cultural Center would be the perfect place in Baltimore to showcase such phenomenal works of art," Congressman Cummings declared. "This photographic journey into the center of the people's daily lives on the African continent helps us to better understand and appreciate our shared humanity - while we also support the universal struggle against the plague of HIV/AIDS."

Photos in the exhibition are part of a coffee table book published in October 2002, also entitled *A Day in the Life of Africa*. All publishing profits from the book will go to the Day in the Life of Africa AIDS Education Fund, administered by the Tides Foundation, in conjunction with Johns Hopkins University Center for Communications Programs, the Harvard AIDS Institute, and the Soul City Foundation.

Workshops on HIV/AIDS education are being conducted for student groups at the Eubie Blake Cultural Center in conjunction with the exhibit.

"Each and every person concerned about humanity should view this exhibit to grasp the depth, breadth, and beauty of the mother continent Africa," Mrs. Camay Murphy, the Executive Director of the Eubie Blake Cultural Center said. "The need to protect and preserve this vast and rich continent from disease should radiate within us all."

The exhibit will be on display until January 24, 2004 at The Eubie Blake Cultural Center, 847 N. Howard Street, Baltimore, Maryland. The exhibit hours are Tuesday through Saturday 10 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Admission is free.

Howard County Outreach Centers

First Monday of the Month:

Glenwood Library, 2350 Route 97
Cooksville, MD 21723

Hours: 4:00PM - 6:00PM or by appointment

Second Monday of the Month:

Howard County Central Library
10375 Little Patuxent Pkwy.
Columbia, MD 21044

Hours: 4:00PM - 6:00PM or by appointment

Second Wednesday of the Month:

Savage Library, 9525 Durness Lane
Laurel, MD 20723

Hours: 4:00PM - 6:00PM or by appointment

Third Monday of the Month:

Florence Bain Senior Center
5470 Ruth Keeton Way
Columbia, MD 21044

Hours: 9:00AM - 11 AM or by appointment

Fourth Monday of the Month:

Miller Branch Library, 9421 Frederick Road
Ellicott City, MD 21042

Congressman Cummings' District Offices

1010 Park Avenue, Suite 105

Baltimore, MD 21201

(410) 685-9199

(410) 685-9399 fax

754 Frederick Road

Catonsville, Maryland 21228

(410) 719-8777

On the Internet <http://www.house.gov/cummings>